

Exodus 12:1-14 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

THE SEDER IS CELEBRATED IN JEWISH HOMES ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF PASSOVER.

THE MEAL RECALLS THE UNLEAVENED BREAD AND LAMB'S MEAT THE JEWISH SLAVES WERE COMMANDED TO EAT ON THE NIGHT- THE ANGEL OF DEATH PASSED-OVER EVERY HOME MARKED ON THE OUTSIDE WITH LAMB'S BLOOD.

EVERY YEAR- THE YOUNGEST CHILD AT THE MEAL IS GIVEN THE HONOR OF ASKING FOUR KEY QUESTIONS THAT TEACH THE MEANING OF THE PASSOVER THE MEAL.

THE FIRST QUESTION ASKS: "WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS?"

IT IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE-THE PASSOVER SEDER REMINDS THE JEWS OF THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH THEM THROUGH MOSES TO SAVE THEM.

IT IS ABOUT HOW GOD RESCUED THEM FROM SLAVERY, GAVE THEM THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND LED THEM INTO THE PROMISED LAND.

WE, AS CHRISTIANS, ARE PEOPLE FROM EVERY TRIBE AND NATION WHO BELONG TO THE NEW COVENANT GOD MADE.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE MIGHT ASK THAT SAME QUESTION ABOUT MAUNDY THURSDAY:

"WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS?"
TONIGHT IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE IT IS THE NIGHT THE PASSION OF CHRIST BEGAN.

IT IS THE NIGHT OF JESUS' ARREST AND SUFFERING, TRIAL AND IMPRISONMENT-THE LAST NIGHT OF HIS MORTAL LIFE.

THIS IS THE NIGHT CHRISTIANS BEGIN THE DEATHWATCH FOR JESUS. WE REMEMBER ALL THAT HAPPENED TO HIM, WAS GOD BECAUSE OF HE SO LOVED THE WORLD, JESUS CAME TO US.

TONIGHT IS ALSO THE NIGHT JESUS ESTABLISHED THE NEW COVENANT. AND HE SEALED IT THROUGH HIS BLOOD WHEN HE DIED THE FOLLOWING DAY.

THIS NIGHT IS DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS BECAUSE ON IT-JESUS GAVE A NEW COMMANDMENT TO GO WITH THE NEW COVENANT GOD ESTABLISHED THROUGH HIM.

OUR COMMUNION MEAL- THE LORD'S SUPPER IS LIKE THE PASSOVER SEDER IN THAT IT REMINDS US ABOUT OUR SLAVERY TO SIN.

IT REMINDS US HOW GOD FREED US FROM THE POWER OF SIN AND DEATH BY THE BLOOD OF HIS SON-JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER LAMB, AND THE LORD'S SUPPER IS THE FEAST HE COMMANDS US TO KEEP. YET IT IS UNLIKE THE PASSOVER MEAL-IN THAT THE NEW COVENANT HAS FULFILLED THE OLD.

WE NO LONGER NEED THE BLOOD OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE, BUT INSTEAD RELY ON THE ONCE FOR ALL SACRIFICE OF JESUS.

ALSO-HOLY COMMUNION IS, FOR MOST CHRISTIANS, CELEBRATED OFTEN- RATHER THAN ONCE A YEAR.

THE REASON WE DO SO IS THAT IT IS NOT ONLY A MEAL OF REMEMBRANCE, BUT IS ALSO ONE THROUGH WHICH GOD SENDS THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FEED OUR SOULS.

IT IS ONE WAY WE ARE ABLE TO COMMUNION WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.

DURING THIS MEAL-WE PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO COMES UPON THE COMMON ELEMENTS OF BREAD AND WINE- TO MAKE THEM AND -US HOLY.

BUT RATHER THAN A SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD OF AN ANIMAL SACRIFICE ON THE OUTSIDE-TO CLEANSE PEOPLE FORM IN, THE SPIRIT AFFIRMS THAT WE ARE CLEANSED WITHIN, BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

BUT BEFORE WE LOOK FURTHER ON THE SACRAMENT LET US REFLECT ON WHAT THIS NIGHT MEANT FOR OUR SAVIOR.

MAUNDY THURSDAY WAS A SIGNIFICANT DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR SAVIOR. MANY IMPORTANT THINGS HAPPENED IN JESUS' LIFE ON THIS EVENING.

ON THE FIRST MAUNDY THURSDAY JESUS PRAYED TO HIS FATHER SO INTENSELY THAT HIS SWEAT WAS AS DROPS OF BLOOD.

ON THIS NIGHT JUDAS BETRAYED HIS FRIEND AND MASTER WITH A KISS, AND THE OTHER DISCIPLE FLED IN FEAR.

THIS IS ALSO THE EVENING WHERE JESUS WOULD STAND BEFORE THE COURT OF THE SANHEDRIN- IN A TRIAL THAT WAS ILLEGAL EVEN BY JEWISH STANDARDS.

TONIGHT WAS THE NIGHT THE SAVIOR WAS DESERTED AND ABANDONED BY ALL HIS DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS.

HE WAS LEFT ALONE- EVEN PETER WHO SWORE TO DIE WITH JESUS, DENIED EVEN KNOWING HIM.

YES, IN ALL THESE WAYS, THIS NIGHT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR JESUS, THE DARKEST NIGHT OF HIS HUMAN LIFE.

BUT BEFORE THE SIN OF THE WORLD CAME CRASHING DOWN TO LAND ON HIS SHOULDERS, JESUS HAD ONE LAST TIME OF FELLOWSHIP AND LAST MEAL WITH THE 12 DISCIPLES, WHOM HE ALSO NAMED AS FRIENDS.

ACTUALLY, IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY THEY SHARED TWO SACRED MEALS ON THIS EVENING. THE FIRST WAS THE TRADITIONAL PASSOVER SEDER.

IT WAS AT THE END OF THE SEDER- JESUS DID TWO SIGNIFICANT THINGS THAT WOULD SHAPE OUR OWN CELEBRATION OF THIS HOLY THURSDAY NIGHT.

FIRST, JESUS GAVE TO THE DISCIPLES A NEW COMMANDMENT: TO LOVE GOD AND TO LOVE NEIGHBOR, AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF.

IT IN FACT, IS FROM THIS PROCLAMATION, WE GET THE NAME MAUNDY THURSDAY, FROM THE LATIN WORD FOR COMMANDMENT. THE SECOND SIGNIFICANT THING JESUS DID WITH AND FOR HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS IS TO CREATE A NEW SACRAMENT.

HE PROVIDED A SACRED MEAL, WHICH WOULD COME TO REPLACE THE PASSOVER SEDER FOR MOST CHRISTIANS.

AFTER SUPPER JESUS TOOK SOME OF THE LEFT OVER BREAD AND WINE AND – SHARED THEM WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

JESUS GAVE ANOTHER COMMANDMENT THAT EVENING TO HIS FOLLOWERS, TO HIS CHURCH- SAYING “DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”.

WE CAN WELL IMAGINE JESUS IN HIS HUMANITY TOOK COMFORT IN KNOWING HIS FOLLOWERS WOULD HAVE A TANGIBLE SIGN TO HELP THEM REMEMBER AND BELIEVE.

HOLY COMMUNIONS IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP THAT REMINDS CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS OF WHAT HE SUFFERED FOR OUR SAKES.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION, UNLIKE BAPTISM, IS ONE JESUS HIMSELF CREATED.

IT IS THEREFORE ONE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST SACRED ACTS OF WORSHIP HIS CHURCH CAN ENGAGE IN TOGETHER.

THE APOSTLE PAUL, IN HIS LETTER TO THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS, ASSERTS TWO IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT THIS SACRED MEAL:

1). THE LORD'S SUPPER IS NOT AN ORDINARY FELLOWSHIP MEAL, NOT A “COVERED DISH SUPPER” INTENDED TO NOURISH THE BODY, BUT RATHER IT IS FOOD FOR THE SOUL. IT IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP AND MUST BE TREATED AS SUCH.

2). PAUL FURTHER ASSERTS THIS SACRAMENT IS AN ACT THAT PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, AND ESPECIALLY THE NEW COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY SEALED WITH CHRIST'S BLOOD.

THE APOSTLE'S TEACHING ON THE LORD'S SUPPER HAS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE THE PASSAGE WE HEARD TONIGHT IS THE OLDEST KNOWN WRITTEN EXPLANATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED MEAL.

IT IS ALSO, IF WE HEARD HIM CORRECTLY, A TEACHING GIVEN TO HIM THROUGH DIVINE REVELATION BY THE RISEN CHRIST, AND NOT SOMETHING HE HEARD FROM HUMAN LIPS.

THE THING JESUS EMPHASIZED REGARDING THIS CELEBRATION WAS THAT HOLY COMMUNION IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP THE CHURCH IS TO DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM, AND HIS SACRIFICE.

THUS THIS SACRAMENT IS VITALLY CONNECTED TO OUR MEMORY OF WHO JESUS IS, AND WHY HE CAME TO EARTH, THAT IS OF- THE PURPOSE OF HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH.

BUT THIS SACRED MEAL DOES MORE THAN MERELY JAR OUR MEMORIES.

BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IT ALSO NOURISHES OUR SOULS AND BRINGS US INTO SPIRITUAL COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND ONE OTHER.

IT ALSO DOES ONE MORE THING: IT IS MUCH LIKE THE RAINBOW.

THE RAINBOW WAS THE SIGN GOD ESTABLISHED AS A REMINDER OF THE COVENANT HE MADE WITH NOAH AND ALL OF CREATION AFTER THE FLOOD.

SIMILARLY, THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION IS A SIGN JESUS SET UP IN HIS CHURCH, AS A REMINDER OF THE NEW COVENANT MADE IN HIS BLOOD.

ON THE ONE HAND, THE LORD'S SUPPER ASSURES US OF THE TOTAL FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS AND OUR SANCTIFICATION, MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE JESUS DIED ON OUR BEHALF.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WHENEVER WE EAT AND DRINK THE BREAD AND WINE WE LIFT UP BEFORE THE ALMIGHTY THIS SIGN OF HIS PROMISE TO FORGIVE US, WHEN WE REPENT.

THEREFORE, AS WE APPROACH THE TABLE TONIGHT LET US REMEMBER GOD'S LOVE FOR US.

LET US REMEMBER AND GIVE THANKS FOR JESUS, WHO IS MOST WORTHY OF OUR PRAISE AND FOR THE GIFT OF THIS SACRAMENT.

TONIGHT, WE ARE NOT GATHERED TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE TO WORSHIP, BUT CONFINED TO OUR SEPARATE RESIDENCES. WE CANNOT SHARE, AS WE OUGHT TO, THIS MEAL IN THE COMMUNITY OF ONE ANOTHER.

BUT PERHAPS WE CAN ALL PARTAKE WHERE EVER WE ARE, WHETHER ALONE OR WITH FAMILY A DIFFERENT KIND OF COMMUNION.

THERE IS A STORY I READ SO MANY YEARS AGO, TOLD BY A PASTOR WHO WAS A POLITICAL PRISONER IN SOME COUNTRY, AND WAS CONFINED ON EASTER WITH OTHERS.

THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED EVEN A CUP OF WATER TO REMAIN WITH THEM IN THE CELL. THIS MEANT THEY HAD NOTHING WITH WHICH TO USE TO CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER DURING EASTER WORSHIP.

AND SO WHEN THE TIME CAME IN THE SERVICE FOR COMMUNION THEY HAD TO USE FAITH ALONE.

THE PASTOR, AFTER THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING HELD UP IMAGINARY BREAD AND A CUP THAT WE NOT THERE, AND PASSED THEM AROUND.

PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGIAN, JOHN CALVIN, WROTE THAT GOD DOES NOT NEED THE BREAD AND WINE TO NOURISH US DURING THE SACRAMENT, BUT IT IS WE WHO NEED SOMETHING TANGIBLE.

SO TONIGHT, WHEN WE HAVE NOTHING, I INVITE ALL OF YOU TO PARTAKE OF THE SACRAMENT USING FAITH ALONE. LET US KEEP IN OUR HEARTS, THE FEAST HE PREPARED FOR US. AMEN

Maundy Thursday Service

First Presbyterian Church Rouses Point NY

Pastor: Rev. Lori Danielson

Organist: Sally Goddard

Call to Worship:

Blessed be the God of our salvation. Who bears our burdens and forgives our sins. Come let us worship God on this Holy Night.

Prayer of Preparation: (Unison)

Holy God, remind us on this special night of the many ways we know you: as strong deliverer, as humble servant, as the One who bids us love one another, that the world might know you. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin: Most Holy God, we come to you in confession, seeking your mercy and forgiveness. We confess that we have not kept our attention on the saving Cross of Christ. We have been distracted and distressed and turned our thoughts too much to the worries of our lives. In the midst of these times we have forgotten to hold fast to faith in you. Forgive for failing to love you, and failing to love other as we love ourselves. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 12:1-14

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Maundy Thursday Meditation: "On This Night"

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: Bless the Lord O my soul.

P: And all that is with in me bless God's holy name.

L: Let us come to the table in thanksgiving for God's grace,

P: And offer to God our evening sacrifice of praise.

L: It is indeed right to praise you God, for you created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them; you made us in your image countless ways you show us your mercy. Above all we praise you for the gift of your Son, Jesus our Lord. He is the true Passover lamb who takes away the sins of the world. By His death He destroyed death, and by His rising brought us eternal life.

With thanksgiving we remember how on the night of his betrayal and arrest, Jesus gave us the New Commandment, and he gave us the sacrament of Holy Communion, as a continual remembrance of his sacrifice. Therefore we lift up this bread and this cup, and offer to Him our praise: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

Lord, and send your Holy Spirit to us that we might receive by faith alone the blessings of the Lord's Supper. Unite us in faith, encourage us with hope, that we may receive Christ as He comes to us in this holy banquet. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor are yours almighty God. Amen.

And now we join in prayer as Christ taught us saying: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name....

Communion of the People-Imagine you are in church with others and take to the bread and share the cup that you cannot see or touch.

Closing prayer: Let us pray- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Help us reflect upon who you are and what you have done for us. Give us a measure of the courage you showed, as we face our own times of darkness. Help us, we pray, to follow your example, and to walk in humble obedience to The Father's will. We ask this all in your Holy name Lord Jesus, and we give you our praise and thanks. Amen

Benediction